

Inclusive Institutions versus Feminist Advocacy:
Women's Legislative Committees and Caucuses in Latin America

Jennifer M. Piscopo
Assistant Professor of Politics
Occidental College
Los Angeles, CA 90041
piscopo@oxy.edu

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Introduction

This paper examines the processes wherein female legislators act for and speak for female constituents—also known as women’s substantive representation—by focusing on the policymaking phases of *deliberation*. Specifically, the paper examines how female legislators’ collective action is sustained through women-specific legislative institutions, which can take three forms: legislative committees with policy remits addressing women or gender, groups of female legislators operating as women’s caucuses, and technical research units that assist lawmakers.¹ This paper analyzes the first two—committees and caucuses—as they provide platforms through which female legislators collaborate: together, female lawmakers decide on which policies to pursue, devise strategies, and form policy advocacy coalitions. Examining women’s committees and women’s caucuses goes beyond existing studies of substantive representation in Latin America, which focus either on measuring and categorizing the bills introduced by female legislators or analyzing their floor votes (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Htun, Lacalle, and Micozzi 2013; Schwindt-Bayer 2010). By contrast, this approach does not simply aggregate female legislators’ individual behavior, but analyzes how institutions create platforms through which female legislators consciously and deliberately act as a group.

The role of legislative institutions (by which I mean institutional arrangements *within* the legislature, not the legislature itself) remains under-theorized and under-studied in the extant literature on substantive representation. Yet these institutions are key independent variables explaining why substantive representation succeeds, as shown in Figure 1. For example, a legislative committee with a clear women’s interest mandate increases the likelihood that legislators act collectively to advance gender-sensitive policies to the plenary. Not only are committees and caucuses vehicles for strengthening female legislators’ ability to cooperate on

specific policies of interest to women (Gonzalez and Sample 2010), but they can introduce a gendered analysis *across* areas, from criminal justice to transportation (IPU 2006; Markham 2012). Consequently, women-specific legislative institutions—if properly designed—can serve as vehicles for *gender mainstreaming* (Marx and Borner 2011), generally understood as the process “to improve the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes, and outcomes” (Walby 2005: 321).

[FIGURE 1 HERE]

Gender mainstreaming, then, represents a particular form of substantive representation, wherein women’s interests are advocated *transversally*. Yet how can women-specific legislative institutions advance women’s interest proposals generally and achieve gender mainstreaming specifically? This chapter answers this question in two ways. First, I draw on data from women-specific legislative institutions in Latin America as a theory-building exercise: what rules shape committees and caucuses, and how might these features affect female legislators’ possibilities to collaborate for substantive representation? I focus committees’ policy remit, policy powers, and membership, and on caucuses’ organization, membership, and policy agendas. I propose that these features of women-specific legislative institutions, as well as their informal norms of cooperation, clearly affect female legislators’ influence over both mainline policies and women’s policies. Further, I argue that the presence of a women’s caucus can substantially enhance the likelihood of this outcome.

Second, I use case studies of Mexico and Argentina to explore these hypotheses, drawing on qualitative interview data with over 70 female legislators from both countries.² The Mexican Congress has an all-female *Comisión de Igualdad de Género* (Commission on Gender Equality, or CIG). The CIG is bicameral, though each branch works independently. The CIG receives

legislation to review (*dictaminar*) from chamber leaders and it may also author and introduce legislation as a committee; in particular, this latter power—typical of all standing committees in the Mexican Congress—allows the CIG to act collectively. The Argentine Congress, by contrast, has no such bicameral institution, nor can Argentine standing committees collectively design and introduce legislation. The Chamber of Deputies has a mixed-sex committee on *Familia, Mujer, Niñez and Adolescencia* (Family, Women, Childhood, and Adolescence, or CFMNA), with no specific policy remit to address gender equality. In the Argentine Senate, the all-female *Banca de la Mujer* [Women’s Bench], was created in March 2008. Intended by its founders to serve as a standing committee, the Women’s Bench actually resembled a caucus: the institution received no *dictamen* powers, and the inclusion of all female senators facilitated networking, but not lawmaking. In 2011, however, the Women’s Bench became a permanent senate committee with regular review powers.

The differences between Argentina and Mexico allow for two comparisons. First, committees’ policy remits, policy powers, and membership can be compared: what effects on substantive representation occur when all-female committees enjoy policy remits on gender equality and bill introduction powers (Mexico) when compared to mixed-sex committees that collapse women’s interests with domestic issues and allow only *dictámenes* (Argentina)? Second, how can women’s committees cooperate with women’s caucuses? Unlike other Latin American countries, both Mexico and Argentina lack formal women’s caucuses—though both the CIG in Mexico and the *Banca de la Mujer* in the Argentine Senate bring *all* female legislators together in caucus-like activities.

This paper’s central insight is that certain features of women-specific legislative institutions force female legislators to trade off *policy scope* for *policy depth*. This tradeoff also

occurs through informal rules of cooperation that emerge within the institution. In Mexico, the CIG's policy remit, policy powers, and membership combine with informal norms of consensus in ways that allows female legislators to affect a broad set of policy areas, but in less feminist ways. Mexican women achieve gender mainstreaming (scope) but not feminist change (depth). However, when women-specific institutions lack these features and informal norms, as in Argentina, they affect fewer policy areas (scope) but in more feminist ways (depth). In other words, the "stronger" the women-specific institution, the more collaborative, and the more collaborative, the less progressive. This result nuances the oft-positing link between women-specific legislative institutions, female legislators' collective power, and gender equality change (cf Gonzalez and Sample 2010). The arrangements in both Mexico and Argentina do enhance substantive representation, but the transformative impact varies depending on the institutions' formal rules and informal norms.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I explore why the design of women-specific legislative institutions matters, suggesting how formal rules may affect lawmakers' ability to undertake substantive representation. Second, I present data on women's committees and women's caucuses across Latin America. I find that most legislative committees with policy remits focused on women or gender lack male members, and that most women's caucuses are formal organizations with a women's policy agenda. The *consequences* for these two trends are then explored using the cases of Argentina and Mexico, respectively. I argue that the formal rules and informal norms of women-specific legislative institutions explain female legislators differ in their collective action and, ultimately, their ability to act for women.

Understanding Women-Specific Legislative Institutions

I use the term “women-specific legislative institutes” to make two definitional points. First, these are organizations *within* the legislature that are dedicated to advancing women’s interests in some way, and second, these organizations may not be structured around gender *per se*. Elsewhere, these measures have been described as “parliamentary gender bodies” (IPU 2006) and “specialized parliamentary bodies in the promotion of gender equality” (Freidenvall and Sawyer n.d.), but these terms do not capture the Latin American reality. Beyond the technical distinction between parliaments and legislatures, these terms suggest that all such institutions aim to challenge deeply-seated hierarchies, norms and practices surrounding femininity and masculinity. By describing these institutions as “women-specific,” I capture how they are founded by, constituted by, and designed for female lawmakers, while allowing their purposes to range from promoting female legislators’ professionalization to transforming power relations..

Yet what distinguishes women-specific committees from women-specific caucuses? Most studies on women’s legislative committees or women’s caucuses come from the practitioner field, where analysts have identified where these institutions exist, described their roles, and recommended best practices (Fernós 2012; IPU 2006; OSCE 2013; Gonzalez and Sample 2010). Gonzalez and Sample define legislative committees (or commissions) as “institutionalized legislative groups with functions that include detailed analysis of draft legislation, proposing new policies and laws, and issuing opinions and monitoring public administration” whereas caucuses are “informal groups of women legislators who channel the women’s interests and concerns within parliament” (2010: 15). In other words, committees are formal institutions that participate in the regular legislative process, also known as “standing committees.” Caucuses, by contrast,

organize myriad activities, from networking among female legislators to lobbying for women's interest proposals. Caucuses do not *have* to assume a policy role.

Nonetheless, Gonzalez and Sample's identification of caucuses as informal requires further specification. According to Helmke and Levitsky, formal institutions are those "sets of rules, procedures, customs and routines" that are written and enforced, usually by the state, whereas "informal institutions" consist of "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (2006: 5). The notion that formality and informality depends on *written rules* and *official sanction* suggests that caucuses can still be formal. For example, the women's parliamentary caucus in Timor-Leste was approved by legislative resolution and backed a political platform signed by all parties' women's wings; it elects officers and manages a budget (Costa, Sawyer, and Sharp 2012: 5). Similarly, in Canada, the liberal party's women's caucus has clear membership criteria (including the payment of a membership fee) and fixed meeting times that strictly follow pre-planned agendas; the caucus must also coordinate with and answer to the party leadership (Steele 2002). The Women Parliamentarians' Club in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has formalized connections to the parliament's Committee on Equal Opportunities, with leaders purposefully occupying posts in both institutions (OSCE 2013: 43). Women's caucuses can clearly adhere to well-defined structures that are subject to enforcement, whether by the caucus itself, a corresponding political party, or the legislature's bylaws.

Women's caucuses in Latin America—discussed in more detail below—present similar aspects of formality. For instance, the *Unión de las Mujeres Parlamentarias de Bolivia* (Union of Parliamentary Women of Bolivia, or UMPABOL) elects officers and receives official recognition from the congress (iKnow Politics 2008: 2). The *Mesa de Mujeres Parlamentarias*

Peruanas (Roundtable of Peruvian Women Politicians, or MMPP) organizes plenary assemblies and elects leaders, and the *Bancada Femenina* in Brazil has internal statutes delineating procedures for elections and meetings (iKnow Politics 2008: 3; UNDP 2011). Some women's caucuses, however, may eschew charters and procedures, relying on informality as understood by Helmke and Levitsky. For example, the *Bicameral Bancada Femenina* (Bicameral Women's Bench, or BBF) in Uruguay deliberately eschews formal structures, internal decision-making organs, and officers (Johnson 2014: 156).

An important distinction thus appears between a caucus's organization and its tactics. Caucuses are formally *organized* when they are recognized by the host legislature or have written rules governing membership, meetings, and leadership: women's caucuses may thus follow formal rules (Bolivia and Peru) or operate informally (Uruguay). Yet caucuses' *tactics*—meaning their strategies for accomplishing their goals—should consistently be informal. For example, the *Bancada Femenina* in Brazil votes as a block in the plenary (González and Sample 2010: 23), but their internal statutes do not mention this practice. The Uruguayan Bicameral Women's Bench never hosts public acts without a “multi-party presence of women” but this strategy remains informal: as Johnson explains, “even though [these rules] are not defined through explicit and formal agreements, they are very internalized in the founders' practice” (2014: 156). As such, tactics correspond to “informal rules in use (the dos and don'ts that actors learn on the ground” (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2011: 576). Caucuses should prefer informal tactics to avoid foreclosing upon their ability to dynamically adapt to shifting legislative environments (OSCE 2013; Gonzalez and Sample 2010).

On this reading, then, committees and caucuses present both similarities and differences. Committees are *always* formal institutions, constituted by the legislature's bylaws and with clear

mandates for reviewing, marking-up, and advancing legislation. Caucuses *may* be formal institutions with their own internal and external rules, as in Bolivia and Peru, or caucuses may be informal networks relying on shared understandings for proceeding, as in Uruguay. In both cases, however, caucuses are stable, public allegiances identifiable to members and non-members: they have names and exist across multiple congressional sessions. Caucuses can undertake activities beyond reviewing and advancing legislation; they may seek to influence policy, but they may also eschew policy advocacy and focus instead on networking and capacity-building. However, both caucuses and committees provide platforms through which female legislators act collectively.

Women-Specific Legislative Institutions in Latin America

A region-wide picture of the formal features of women-specific legislative institutions across Latin America helps contextualize the cases of Argentina and Mexico. Across the region, women-specific legislative committees vary in their policy remits, namely, whether they address women and/or gender, or address women in conjunction with broader domestic concerns. Male legislators are more commonly seated on women's committees with domestic policy remits: as the committee's policy scope narrows, male legislators' participation decreases. Male legislators similarly do not participate in the region's women's caucuses, which typically combine formal organizations with a women's interest policy agenda.

Women's Committees

I focus on regular standing committees and their formal rules, meaning policy remits, policy powers (ability to author bills), and membership. I include women's committees in Costa Rica and Uruguay: while these two institutions are technically "permanent special" committees,

they have the same review powers as regular standing committees. I discount special or investigatory committees convened to address specific women's interests, as these vary in their mandate, politicization, powers, effectiveness, and duration. Uruguay and Mexico, for instance, have non-permanent committees addressing gender violence that, while significant, do not review, mark-up, and advance legislation.

To measure policy remit, I use the committee's title. Names capture how women's interests are framed and prioritized within the legislature. In Argentina, for example, the women-specific committee is titled "*Familia, Mujer, Niñez y Adolescencia*" (Family, Women, children, and Adolescence)." This mandate conflates women's interests with private matters: as one female legislator commented, "the name is really horrible; it implies that women have to do with everything [domestic], the kitchen, the pets, the laundry."³ In Mexico, by contrast, the women's committee began life titled "*Equidad y Género*" (Equity and Gender) and recently changed its name to "*Igualdad de Género*" (Gender Equality).

Consequently, the titles of women-specific legislative committees send clear signals about policymaking priorities. Women's interests may be addressed separately, as matters of equity or equality, or linked to traditional domestic matters. A broad categorization captures one of three possible policy remits for women's committees: women/gender only, women and domestic matters, or domestic matters only. To be categorized as including "domestic matters," the title may refer to family and/or identify other domestic residents, such as children, adolescents, and the elderly.

Table 1 shows the variation in policy remit for women-specific committees in Latin America's lower chambers or unicameral legislatures as of 2014, and the full names appear in Table 2. Bolivia and Ecuador are absent, as their legislative committees' titles mention *neither*

women nor domestic matters. Of the remaining countries, nine have committees dedicated exclusively to women or gender; four have policy mandates spanning women and domesticity; and seven have remits focusing on domestic matters. For countries with bicameral legislatures, most structures are paralleled in the senate with two exceptions: in Argentina, the Senate has a women's bench rather than a women and domesticity committee, and, in Uruguay, the lower house's Gender and Equity Committee has no senate counterpart.

[TABLE 1 HERE]

Notably, four countries with domestic-matters-only committees—the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—*also* have women/gender only committees, as shown by the italics in Table 1. This combination (also present in the Mexican Senate but not the Chamber of Deputies) shows the legislature's clear distinction between domestic issues, on the one hand, and women's interests, on the other. Consequently, only five Latin American countries lack a specialized women's committee, either in the women/gender only form or the women-and-domesticity form: these are Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela, which have a domestic-matters-only committee without a corresponding women/gender committee, combined with Ecuador and Bolivia, which have none of these variations.

Yet without a committee mandated to assess women's interest policies, whether exclusively or alongside domestic matters, female lawmakers face significant hurdles in achieving substantive representation. For instance, female legislators cannot consistently analyze policies using a gendered lens. Consider the myriad proposals for gender quotas in Chile: the 2011 proposal was reviewed by the Culture Commission, whereas the 2014 proposal, due to its inclusion in a broader package of electoral reforms, was reviewed by the Constitution, Legislation, and Justice Commission. Bills addressing family violence, including violence

between spouses, cohabiting couples, and non-cohabiting couples, are received by the Family and Elderly Commission, whereas proposals to equalize men's and women's healthcare premiums are sent to the Health Commission.⁴ Moreover, spreading women's interest proposals across committees increases collective action problems: female lawmakers wishing to coordinate on certain bills must spend more time tracking initiatives and lobbying allies. When one legislative committee receives *all* the women's interest proposals, by contrast, experts and allies are concentrated within one body and act more efficiently.

Women/gender only committees, and even women-and-domesticity-committees, are thus more likely to facilitate substantive representation generally and gender mainstreaming particularly. While these outcomes also depend on the gender consciousness and party identification of individual committee members, policy remits indicate the required expertise and approach. The strongest signal of commitment to substantive representation appears where standing committees are organized exclusively around women or gender, as in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Moreover, most committee remits *within* this category emphasize gender over women. Costa Rica and Guatemala have a women's committee, and Colombia has a "women's equity" committee. The remaining six—the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay—refer either to "gender equity" or "gender equality." In Latin America, legislatures with women/gender only committees are also (coincidentally) the legislatures where committees have the power to design and introduce legislation, as in Costa Rica and Mexico.

The presence of a women/gender only committee raises the inverse question of that asked for Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela: instead of asking where the women's interest proposals go, the question becomes, where do family proposals go? Colombia, Costa Rica,

Mexico, Paraguay and Uruguay do not have separate standing committees for domestic matters. In these cases, such proposals are often received and reviewed, at least in part, by the women/gender committee. The CIG in Mexico, for instance, receives proposals on children's rights and welfare as well as family violence. Yet the application of a gendered analytical lens appears more likely when a women/gender only committee reviews proposals on domestic matters (as in Mexico) than when a domestic committee reviews proposals on women's rights and roles (as in Chile). For example, the CIG in Mexico specifies on its website that the "use of a gendered perspective allows us to understand that there exists an asymmetry [between men and women] manifested in the utilization of power."⁵ The Family and Elderly committee in Chile only has an express mandate to consider child abuse.⁶

Further, since female legislators are overwhelmingly more likely than male legislators to represent women's interests (Piscopo 2011), committees' membership should affect substantive representation. Table 2 compares the proportions of male and female legislators seated on the women's committees to the total number of female legislators seated in each chamber, revealing that female legislators are universally over-represented on women's committees relative to their total chamber membership. In Colombia for example, female lawmakers comprise 12 percent of chamber seats but 100 percent of the women's committee. This trend holds as female legislators' increase their strength in the chamber: even as female legislators' total numbers approach 40 percent (Costa Rica, Mexico, Argentina, and Honduras), they still comprise the *vast majority* (74 percent or more) of the women's committees. This finding coincides with research categorizing these committees as female-dominant (Langston and Aparicio 2009; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, and Taylor Robinson 2005) and further suggests that female legislators' increased overall numbers do not socialize male legislators into advocating women's interests.

[TABLE 2 HERE]

Yet male legislators' membership on women's committees remains above zero, even reaching highs of 78 percent in Panama and 80 percent in Guatemala. A first glance shows notable within-category variation: male legislators either hold many seats or no seats on women/gender only committees (i.e., zero percent in Colombia and Costa Rica compared to 56 percent in Uruguay) as well as many or no seats on domestic-matters-only committees (zero percent in Honduras compared to 80 percent in Guatemala). Yet a closer look reveals that committee type substantially explains this pattern: male legislators' participation on *average* is lower for women/gender only committees (18 percent) when compared to women-and-domesticity committees (31 percent) and domestic-matters-only committees (37 percent). As committees' policy remit is narrow to focus exclusively on women or gender, male legislators' membership decreases.

Male lawmakers' lower participation in women/gender only committees offers advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, female legislators' control of women's committees provides continuity between the bill introduction stage and the deliberation and advocacy stage. Female legislators can act collectively within committees to ensure favorable proposals receive positive *dictámenes* and to apply gendered perspectives (mainstream). On the other hand, female legislators will need allegiances with their male counterparts *outside* the committee setting. This task becomes especially crucial in countries where—as in Argentina and Mexico—party leaders control the plenary agenda and/or the voting outcome. Informal norms of collaboration, both within committees and with external allies, may be critical in advancing substantive representation.

Women's Caucuses

Despite their heralded potential to empower female legislators (Gonzalez and Sample 2010), only eight Latin American countries have women's caucuses, defined as public, identifiable associations of legislators. These organizations bring female legislators together on the basis of their identity, whereas standing committee members require that legislators act not solely according to their individual experiences, but based on party and constituent preferences. Johnson's description of Uruguay's Bicameral Women's Bench illustrates the crucial role identity plays in caucus formation: all the participating legislators "presented themselves as women, not as representatives of their respective political parties, that is, they signaled that they were undertaking this initiative 'setting aside different ideologies'" (Johnson 2014: 151). Similarly, the Parliamentary Women's Group in El Salvador describes itself as comprising "all the women, all the parties, working for gender equality" and the internal statute of the Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights in Ecuador explains that it unites legislators "without differences based on party, ideology, or any other kind."⁷

Women's caucuses thus differ from women's committees in *why* legislators join. Membership in women's caucuses is not just voluntary but affective and emotive, raising interesting questions about whether male legislators join and whether *all* or some female legislators join. Formality will also affect how caucuses work, given that the organizations can either be officially acknowledged by the host legislature and/or have internal statutes that govern composition and decision-making. Given that women's caucuses in all cases save Uruguay have some type of internal statutes, I explore whether and how caucuses are also recognized by the host legislature: such recognition speaks to caucuses' resources and prominence. Finally, since

caucuses can be organized for activities that many not relate to substantive representation (e.g., mentoring and training), I measure whether the caucus has an explicit women’s interest agenda.⁸

Table 3 captures these dimensions of women’s caucuses, revealing common trends across Latin America. First, all caucuses except the Ecuadorian unite *all* female lawmakers in the chamber—without participation from men. Ecuador’s caucus similarly differs in its name: whereas the other caucuses are “for women” or “of women,” Ecuador’s caucus is for women’s *rights* (Parliamentary Group for Women’s Rights). The internal statute reads that the caucus will “promote, assist, diffuse, socialize, and deepen and incorporate human rights with a gender focus into all laws, and to guarantee compliance with the rights and principles of non-discrimination and equality between men and women.”⁹ Male legislators have participated actively in the group since its formation, and not all female legislators join. As with women’s committees, mixed-sex women’s caucus can carry advantages and disadvantages, in that female legislators may usefully cultivate male allies while diluting a common allegiance based on gender identity.

Second, all caucuses except the Colombian receive some recognition by the host legislature, most notably through legislative acts recognizing the caucus charter or incorporating the charter into the chambers’ *reglamento* (rules).. Typically, caucuses receive this recognition several years after their founding: for instance, the Brazilian Women’s Bench formed in 2007 and became officially incorporated into the Chamber of Deputies as part of the “Women’s Secretariat” in 2013.¹⁰ Other caucuses also receive legislative recognition in the form of offices and support staff (Peru and Uruguay) and in websites where the caucus can disseminate documents, reports, initiatives, and other information (all save Bolivia and Colombia).¹¹ These resources can enhance the caucuses’ visibility and effectiveness.

[TABLE 3 HERE]

Third and most importantly, all women's caucuses have policy agendas that commit them to undertaking women's substantive representation in ways consistent with a feminist conceptualization of women's interests presented (Piscopo 2011).¹² For instance, the Peruvian Roundtable of Women Parliamentarians describes its policy focus on women's political participation, violence against women in politics, women's health, violence against women and femicide, and trafficking.¹³ Even Latin America's only informally-organized caucus—the Bancada Femenina in Uruguay—pushes a women's interests agenda. Between 2005-2010, for instance, caucus members advocated proposals that penalized sexual violence and trafficking, eliminated gender bias from migration laws, deepened sexual education, and protected maternity leave and domestic workers (BBF 2010). In Bolivia, despite tensions in 2006 and 2007 surrounding the election of a non-feminist leader to head UMPABOL (Cabezas 2008: 122), the 2009-2014 leadership committed to passing laws “that continue the practice of *despatriarcalización* [removing patriarchy from society].”¹⁴

Women's caucuses thus commonly unite all female legislators beneath the objective of substantive representation. When women's caucuses form in legislatures that have domestic-affairs-only committees—as in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Brazil—they can serve as alternative platforms for female legislators' collective action. Indeed, women's caucuses in the Argentine Senate, Colombia and Uruguay initially served this purpose: in a successful act of substantive representation, the caucuses' then successfully lobbied to create their chambers' women/gender only committee (Mesa de Género 2012; Johnson 2014). In Argentina, the women-specific committee *replaced* the caucus but retained the membership roster of all female senators; in Colombia and Uruguay, by contrast, the committees and the caucuses now work together to advocate gender policies. The combination of a women/gender only committee *plus* a

women's caucus appears strongest for advancing women's interests, making the cases of El Salvador, Colombia, and Uruguay especially notable.

Comparing Women-Specific Institutions in Argentina and Mexico

This analysis has illuminated the formal features of committees and caucuses that may positively affect women's substantive representation, as summarized in Table 4. For committees, policy remits of women/gender and policy powers of bill authorship and introduction can enhance substantive representation, whereas all-female membership can have mixed effects. For caucuses, an all-female membership enhances female legislators' ability to collaborate based on their shared gender identity, and official legislative recognition gives caucus members more status and prestige.

[TABLE 4 HERE]

Table 5 shows how Mexico and Argentina match up on these measures. In Mexico, the bicameral *Comisión de Igualdad y Género* (CIG)—originally the *Comisión de Equidad y Género* (CEG)—began as a special committee in 1998 and received permanent status in 2000. The CIG has an exclusively female membership and a women/gender policy remit. In Argentina, the lower chamber's *Comisión de Familia, Mujer, Niñez, y Adolescencia* (CFMNA) has mixed-sex membership and a policy remit that includes domestic affairs, while the Senate's *Banca de Mujer* (Women's Bench) has a women/gender policy remit and includes all female senators. The *Banca de la Mujer* served as a women's caucus before converting to a standing committee in 2011. Presently, neither congress has a women's caucus when caucuses are defined as public, identifiable, stable associations of legislators that exist across congressional terms.. However, the CIG in Mexico sustains a cross-party movement of female legislators *beyond* the committee roster that, while not named or identified as a caucus, certainly behaves like one. As discussed in

more detail below, the CIG serves as a focal point that unites female legislators based on their gender identity, sets policy agendas, and develops and launches advocacy strategies.

[TABLE 5 HERE]

The case studies consequently allow us to identify the informal rules through which women-specific institutions operate, “ways of doing” that are not evident from focusing exclusively on their formal features (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010). The Mexican CIG’s not only organizes and sustains caucus-like activities, but it bases all decisions on a consensus norm. This consensus norm is not inevitable: in Mexico, unlike in Argentina, the majority party does *not* receive the majority of all committee seats, making intra-committee disagreements are more likely in Mexico (Alemán 2003: 21). The CIG’s reliance on consensus is thus not inevitable—a majority decision rule would make committee work more efficient, but CIG members have long recognized that only unanimity would make their policy efforts effective.

The CIG’s informal preference for unanimity began with its creation. When the committee first formed in 1998, feminist legislators from the left-leaning *Partido Revolucionario Democrático* (PRD) disagreed with female legislators from the conservative *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) on the committee’s name. As a then-PRD deputy explained, feminists wanted to title the committee *Igualdad de Género* (Gender Equality), but *panista* women preferred *Equidad de Género* (Gender Equity). The interviewee recalled that PAN legislators preferred equity because it implied equivalence before the law without challenging gender roles, whereas equality implied that absence of sex role distinctions and even support for reproductive rights: “we needed consensus [when agreeing on the name].... because some women were fearful of threatening men by demanding equality, we settled on equity.”¹⁵ Female leftists’ initial decision—to favor a compromise name over a feminist principle—created a longstanding legacy

“to do everything by consensus.”¹⁶ Only when *all* female legislators, including female *panistas*, recognized that “the time had come” to emphasize equality and eliminate the discrepancies that exist between men and women, could the committee collectively change the name.¹⁷ During the 2012-2015 congressional term, the Committee on Gender Equity (*Eguidad de Género*) became the Committee on Gender Equality (*Igualdad de Género*).

This example not only reinforces the notion that committee names matter for establishing policy remits and framing legislators’ bill review work, but it illustrates the key *modus operandi* of the Mexican CIG. Leftist legislators seek common ground with conservative legislators, accepting the dilution or elimination of feminist claims in order to move policy forward. As a PRI deputy explained, “we must always walk the middle of the road... we must counter the perception that women always fight with each other.”¹⁸ In the Argentine chamber’s CFMNA, by contrast, an informal consensus norm does not exist. Argentine interviewees routinely cited fights among women on gender policies, especially on topics related to reproductive rights and gender role equalization.¹⁹ Yet unlike in Mexico, disputes are not avoided by compromises that advance policy. Feminist proposals may be abandoned altogether, in which case the CIG and the CFMNA *both* forestall transformative gender proposals. However, the absence of a consensus norm in Argentina does allow female legislators to continue arguing and to push forward feminist policies, for these critical actors need not rely on unanimity—only on majority—support to move forward.

Collective Action as Consensus: the Case of Mexico

In Mexico, female legislators have a history of collaboration that predates the formation of the CIG. Collective action can be traced to 1993, when, building on momentum attained by reforming the definition of marital rape, feminists from within the PRI and the PRD formed the

group “From A to Z,” whose slogan was “Women walk a ways together before our policy differences separate us” (Tarrés 2006: 418).²⁰ In 1997, female legislators attended a conference entitled “Avancemos un trecho” [Let’s Move Forward a Stretch]. Women from eight political parties, including the PAN, “moved forward” by agreeing on a five-point legislative agenda, as follows: (1) ensuring freedom from discrimination based on gender; (2) regulating the rights and responsibilities of family maintenance; (3) prohibiting pregnancy tests for employment and ending the termination of pregnant employees; (4) providing daycare in the workplace; (5) implementing more aggressive programs to combat family violence (Tarrés 2006: 418; Stevenson 1999: 72). Importantly, these agendas emphasized female legislators’ common ground both in their names, e.g., “walking together” and in their proposals, which emphasized ending discrimination, non-violence, and women’s double day.

The installation of the bicameral CIG in 1997 created a platform through which these legislative agendas could be realized. Importantly, the CIG received a mandate that explicitly focused on gender mainstreaming: even though “equity” rather than “equality” constituted the committee’s initial policy remit, the committee’s charter stated its purpose “of ensuring that the government adopts public policies with a gendered perspective.”²¹ Alongside the formal mandate of gender mainstreaming came the informal consensus norm, which shaped not simply the committee’s name but its leadership structure: the founding legislator decided that the committees’ vice-presidents and secretaries must represent all the political parties.²²

This emphasis on cooperation, compromise, and consensus has allowed the CIG to sustain networks and activities that resemble those of a women’s caucus, even if the broader organization of female legislators is not named or identified as such. Most notably, female lawmakers secured statutory approval to host the first *Parlamento de Mujeres* [Women’s

Parliament] in 1998. Convened in the plenary chamber of the Congress, the *Parlamento* included female participants from party directorates, ministries, and the women's movement; male legislators and male party leaders could not participate, though they could attend and observe. The *Parlamento* organized participants into working groups on political participation, intra-family violence, education, employment, family law, women's health, women in the media, indigenous women, and peasant women. Each working group then drafted policy recommendations; these were later read aloud during a plenary session, published in the congressional record, and sent to the CIG for further development. The Women's Parliaments became an annual tradition that capitalized upon the CIG's ability to collectively author and introduce proposals.²³

During the 2000s, collaborative efforts among female legislators *outside* the CIG, often in partnership with civil society groups, continued to develop an agenda for substantive representation *inside* the CIG. In 2000, Mexican female candidates signed a document of shared goals entitled "Hacia una Agenda Legislativa...por la Equidad" [Towards a Legislative Agenda for Equity]. Following the elections, the newly-elected lawmakers convened a *Congreso Nacional de Mujeres hacia la Reforma del Estado* [National Women's Congress for the Reform of the State]. This convention—held in the congressional chamber but without the attendance of male legislators—allowed female legislators to establish priorities and develop proposals. Subsequently, in 2003, 2007, and 2009, female legislators-elect representing all parties signed *Pactos Entre Mujeres* [Pacts among Women] at ceremonies in the Mexican Congress. All agreements focused on the following objectives: greater budgetary appropriations for women's programs, combating violence against women, promoting reproductive rights, enhancing women's political participation, ending discrimination, and ensuring fairness in family

responsibilities. While individual *panistas* did not consistently support the *pactos*, female legislators from the remaining parties saw these documents as outlining their policy goals.²⁴

This norm of cooperation expressed by many or all female legislators marks a distinctive feature of women-specific institutions in the Mexican Congress. Even though the *parlamentos* and the *pactos* do not constitute a women's caucus, nor did their organizers perceive them as such, they sustain collective action with the CIG as the focal point. As a longtime PRI congresswoman observed, "We all go to the committee meetings, even if we are not members."²⁵ Further, the CIG and the related *pactos* and *parlamentos* create continuity among women elected each congressional term. A PRD deputy explained that female legislators elected from the 1980s through the 2000s "passed the torch" to each other, and a PAN deputy recalled that "I chose the Committee on Equity and Gender because I knew there was an agenda pending."²⁶ Finally, the *pactos* and *parlamentos* bolster women's policy advocacy based on their gender identity rather than their party allegiance. As one *panista* woman explained, "There are gender issues that are obvious, that cannot be ignored, and many female deputies support them; those that are not convinced say nothing, because they would never go against their own gender."²⁷ A PRI deputy likewise noted that, in the moment of voting on a women's interest proposal, female deputies "would go to their party leaders and ask for permission to 'go with the women' and not with the party."²⁸ Her co-partisan also observed that "we are all united in our gender, and this will transcend all other political divisions."²⁹

Yet one outcome of cooperation and consensus has been female legislators' conscious decision to focus only on those women's interests that enjoy multi-party support. María Luisa Farrera Paniagua, then-President of Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute, said in 2003, "A constitutive characteristic of this new political practice is the pact among women. Before our

partisan or ideological differences separate us, there is a common path that we can walk along together.”³⁰ Nearly every interviewee in Mexico, including *panista* women, mentioned an explicit agreement among female legislators to not discuss “divisive” or “controversial” issues, specifically challenges to the notion that life begins at conception³¹. While the *Pacto Entre Mujeres* does mention reproductive rights, none of the agreements use strong language about women’s liberation or women’s autonomy. They never mention abortion. One female legislator described this process succinctly: “We meet at the beginning of each term, and we establish our common goals; we make an agenda and we know in advance that we all agree; we decide to set aside what we cannot agree on, namely abortion.”³² As Tarrés concludes, female activists and elites in Mexico “decided to maintain an equilibrium between what was politically correct and what was possible” (2006: 416).

In summary, the CIG’s policy remit, policy powers of bill authorship and introduction, and informal ability to sustain broad, caucus-like activities and networks has greatly advanced women’s substantive representation in the Mexican Congress—but only on those women’s interests for which consensus can be achieved. Further, the CIG’s all-female membership structure, and the informal participation rules barring male legislators from the *pactos* and the *parlamentos*. have created the impression that women’s substantive representation is exclusively women’s work. Female legislators like to joke about the CIG’s only male member since its creation: he arrived at the first meeting, fled, and never came back, enforcing the idea of the CIG as an all-women space³³. Ironically, greater collaboration among women explains why so few male legislators in Mexico author women’s interest bills when compared to their Argentine counterparts (Piscopo 2011). Female legislators in Mexico have assumed ownership of a gender agenda, but, in doing so, they have sidelined the men.

Collective Action without Consensus: The Case of Argentina

In Argentina, by contrast, long-term, sustained coordination among female legislators has not occurred historically. As one deputy explained, “We feminist legislators do not try to convince the *diputadas inconscientes* [female deputies without awareness of gender].”³⁴ Another Argentine lawmaker commented that initiatives arise from the “will of the individual legislator” rather than coordinated agendas.³⁵ Thus, though female legislators in Mexico use their unofficial caucuses (*pactos and parlamentos*) and the CIG to undertake substantive representation, female legislators in Argentina rely on individual initiatives and cultivate ad-hoc, temporary, and informal coalitions to support specific policy issues.³⁶ The CFMNA, with its mixed-sex membership and women-and-domestic matters policy remit, provides neither a focal point for female legislators in the chamber nor a platform exclusively destined for substantive representation.

Many Argentine interviewees, from feminists to allies to non-supporters, recognized the existence of an informal group of feminist women from across the political parties who worked on gender issues. One feminist legislator—who positioned herself as within the group—described the network as consisting of 10 to 12 women, including the female vice-president of the chamber. This informal group drafted a “legislative gender plan” for 2008-2010.³⁷ Unlike in Mexico, however, the document did not form part of the congressional record nor did inform any collaborative policy-authoring efforts. Another female legislator, though supportive of the group’s aims, explained that the groups’ members and their agenda were gradually marginalized and disregarded, saying that “the feminists in the chamber received more and more dirty looks.”³⁸ In general, interviewees recognized that a cadre of women did act as if they were part

of a caucus, but in general their organization was never fully realized and the female participants were perceived as “not working on very important issues.”³⁹

The *Banca de la Mujer* in the Senate, when initially constituted, suffered from a similar lack of authority and prestige. Despite its open membership, many female senators eschewed the institution, which reflected the not-widely-shared feminist commitment of its founder, then-senator María Cristina Perceval.⁴⁰ One female legislator chastised this group for concentrating on social issues; she added that, while it was generally good that feminist legislators were attentive to and critical of discrimination, they could not “keep acting in constant opposition to men.”⁴¹ Argentine interviewees largely stressed images of female legislators, especially feminists, as combative—in contrast to the cooperative image enjoyed by their Mexican counterparts.

Consequently, neither the CFMNA nor the *Banca de la Mujer* sustain caucus-like activities in ways comparable to the CIG in Mexico. The CFMNA’s mixed-sex membership may partially explain this difference: the CFMNA has always had male members, with male legislators’ presence averaging 16 percent (5 of 28) each session. In the 2013-2015 congress, for instance, men comprised 24 percent of the CFMNA’s membership, even occupying the presidency. No interviewees cited the CFMNA or the *Banca de la Mujer* as a focal point for female legislators’ discussion of or collaboration on gender interests, *unless* the CFMNA had received a specific proposal for consideration. Unlike in Mexico, Argentine committees do not design or initiate legislation directly. Nor did female lawmakers reference any instances wherein committee discussions inspired a female lawmaker to individually initiate a bill.

In general, Argentine legislators, unlike their Mexican counterparts, appeared conscious of avoiding the stigma associated with representing women. Female lawmakers in Argentina stressed their desire to avoid two types of reputations. First, they cannot be seen as exclusively

interested in women. Second, while being a gender specialist appears particularly damaging, being single-minded about any policy area seems harmful⁴²; legislators must show they are prolific in their interests and diverse in their competencies. These comments reveal the low strategic value many female representatives placed on platforms or spaces such as the *Banca de la Mujer*. The lack of institutional support most likely exacerbates the low value placed on female lawmakers' collective action: in Mexico, the fact that the Congress hosted activities such as the *Parlamento* signaled a broader legislative support for women's collaboration than what has appeared in Argentina.

However, feminist legislators also avoided transforming the women's committees into broader platforms in order to preserve their commitment to specific gender policies. As one member of the informal network explained, "I never tried to form a women's bloc... it would kill the informal network."⁴³ In contrary to those female legislator seeking better platforms for cooperation in the Argentine Congress, she believed a women/gender only committee or women's caucus would weaken a feminist agenda by allowing non-supporters to enter and undermine the group. Currently, the informal network functioned better because it includes "only those who are explicitly feminist."⁴⁴ An inclusive membership structure could, as in the Mexican case, force compromises that would dilute feminist policy objectives.

Scope v. Depth: Policy Remits and Gender Mainstreaming

The differing formal features and informal norms of the women-specific legislative institutions in Argentina and Mexico ultimately affect how substantive representation unfolds. Specifically, these arrangements shape which *types* of women's interest proposals become the focus of female legislators' collaboration. In Mexico, the informal practice of "walking together," combined with the CIG's policy remits to advance women's equality generally and

achieve gender mainstreaming specifically, has led female legislators to equity policies across a broad set of policy areas. In Argentina, neither the CFMNA in the Chamber of Deputies nor the *Banca de la Mujer* in the Senate have achieved this goal.

In Mexico, female legislators from the PAN, PRI, and PRD were asked “what introducing proposals to benefit women meant to them.” They consistently answered using two words: *armonización* [harmonization] and *transversalidad* [mainstreaming]. By *armonización*, the interviewees meant revising Mexico’s existing statutes in order to incorporate the doctrine of gender equality. *Transversalidad* describes the incorporation of women’s perspectives, wellbeing, and needs into the policymaking process. Both *armonización* and *transversalidad* are ways of talking about gender mainstreaming, one in terms of existing regulations (*armonización*) and one in terms of new initiatives (*transversalidad*). Indeed, twenty percent (72 of 360) of women’s interest proposals presented in the Mexican Congress between 1999 and 2009 can be classified as mainstreaming initiatives, that is, they seek to impose “gender friendly” regulations on myriad government branches and agencies (Piscopo 2011).

In terms of *armonización*, legislators have reformed statutes that address employment, domestic violence, and civil and political liberties. Given the CIG’s mandate to advance equality, proposing amendments to these statutes—for instance, demanding that police officers give women’s testimonies the same weight as men’s testimonies—becomes a fairly straightforward, and largely technical, process. In terms of *transversalidad*, female legislators have targeted bureaucratic procedures dealing with employment discrimination, rights promotion, and criminal and civil procedures in the areas of gender-based violence and female prisoners. Some initiatives have sought gender-equalizing initiatives outside these areas, demanding, for instance, that the tourism ministry create programs that showcase indigenous women’s distinct contributions to

native cultures, or the telecommunications agency broadcast more images of girls playing sports. Beyond a subset of proposals dealing with pay equity and parental leave, neither *armonización* nor *transversalidad* dramatically redistribute economic resources. Nor do they challenge reproductive rights. Consequently, feminist proposals in Mexico largely focus on labor laws, violence against women, and political, electoral, and constitutional reforms. Equal employment, freedom from violence, and nondiscrimination are policies that women from the right and the left—from the PRI, PRD, and PAN—can agree on.

In Argentina, by contrast, no female interviewees mentioned *transversalidad* as either an approach to or an objective of policymaking. Without a committee in the Chamber of Deputies with a clear equality remit, female lawmakers in the lower chamber lack the numbers, interest, and the resources to infuse a gender perspective into the policymaking process. In the Senate, the *Banca de la Mujer*—despite its formal features that should, in theory, support substantive representation—does not inspire widespread cooperation among female senators. Rather, individual feminist legislators introduce proposals in an ad-hoc manner, and collaborations among female legislators are temporary, with most Argentine lawmakers eschewing both women’s committees and women’s caucuses.

These features of female legislators’ collective action (or lack thereof), when combined with the differences in the institutions’ policy work, suggest that one way to conceptualize women-specific legislative institutions’ influence on substantive representation lies with the tradeoff between *scope* and *depth*. By scope, I mean the extent to which women’s interest agendas and proposals cover multiple policy areas. By depth, I meant whether women’s interest agendas and proposals conceive of radical transformations to gender roles. Scope captures

whether women's substantive representation is wide-ranging, and depth captures whether it is transformative.

[FIGURE 4.2 HERE]

Figure 4.2 depicts this relationship. Women's proposals in Mexico are broad in scope: the CIG's remit and ability to design and introduce legislation, its legitimization of women's collaboration in caucus-like events and activities, and its emphasis on multi-party consensus allow female lawmakers to affect change across myriad policy areas. Yet women's interest proposals in Mexico lack depth. "Walking together"—as carried out through the CIG and the *parlamentos*, *pactos* and other activities—remains effective only so long as female legislators agree, and female legislators agree only so long as radical reforms, especially expansions of reproductive rights, are left off the table. In Mexico, those reforms that succeed deal with consensus issues related to non-discrimination, gender quotas, and violence against women. In Argentina, by contrast, there are no informal practices of collaboration that prevent female legislators from introducing policies that propose deep revisions to men's and women's roles. Women lawmakers in Argentina have won multiple reforms dealing with contraception and sexual education—but they have done so on an individual basis, without widespread support from women-specific legislative institutions. Nonetheless, female legislators in Argentina cannot intervene across multiple policy areas, let alone adopt *transversalidad*. Women's interests in Argentina are transformative, but narrow.

Conclusion

Latin America's legislatures provide myriad options for addressing women's interests within legislature. Several trends, however, remain apparent. First, in terms of committees, the region's legislatures favor standing committees that exclusively address women and/or gender,

and these committees have fewer or no male members when their policy remits are tailored to equality. Argentina and Mexico illustrate these trends. The Mexican CIG pursues gender equality proposals without any male members, whereas the Argentine CFMA incorporates men and lacks gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Second, both women's committees and women's caucuses provide the space for female legislators to act collectively in undertaking substantive representation, and women's caucuses in particular provide space for articulating shared agendas, bridging party differences, and building consensus. When consensus norms develop, as in the Mexican case, they have significant results. This paper suggests that consensus norms in fact narrow feminist agendas to those equality policies that are least threatening to women from conservative parties. Specifically, multi-party collaboration among women takes reproductive rights off the table. Mexico and Argentina thus reflect two opposite cases in the nature of women's substantive representation. In Mexico, broad scope (*transversalidad*) but no depth; in Argentina, significant depth but little scope. In summary, focusing on the role of women-specific legislative institutions helps answer a question posed by Htun and Weldon (2010): why are specific gender equality policies adopted in some countries and not others?

Endnotes

- ¹ Technical research units are found in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Mexico.
- ² I conducted 50 interviews with female legislators in Argentina in three waves: 2005, 2007, and 2009, and 19 interviews with female legislators or legislative staffers in Mexico in three waves, 2009, 2013, and 2014.
- ³ Argentina Interview, May 18, 2009.
- ⁴ My analysis of Chile's legislative record, which can be studied here: http://www.camara.cl/pley/pley_buscador.aspx.
- ⁵ Comisión de Igualdad de Género, "Conceptos en Materia de Equidad y Género [Concepts Regarding Gender Equity]." http://www3.diputados.gob.mx/camara/001_diputados/008_comisioneslx/001_ordinarias/015_equidad_y_genero/001_equidad_y_genero (Accessed May 17, 2014).
- ⁶ See the committee's mandate here: http://www.camara.cl/trabajamos/comision_mandatosgral.aspx?prmID=415.
- ⁷ For El Salvador: <http://www.asamblea.gob.sv/pleno/gpm> (accessed June 30, 2014); For Ecuador: http://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/noticia/el_grupo_parlamentario_por_los_derechos_de_las_mujeres_aprobo_reglamento_interno (accessed June 30, 2014).
- ⁸ I rely on caucuses' websites, newspaper coverage of caucus activity, and secondary sources.
- ⁹ See http://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/noticia/el_grupo_parlamentario_por_los_derechos_de_las_mujeres_aprobo_reglamento_interno.
- ¹⁰ See <http://www2.camara.leg.br/a-camara/secretaria-da-mulher/o-que-e-a-secretaria-da-mulher>.
- ¹¹ Colombia's *Bancada Femenina* lacks an institutional website, but has a blog hosted by the non-governmental organization committed to transparency, *Congreso Visible*.
- ¹² The classification of Bolivia was based on Llanos and Sample (2008a).
- ¹³ See http://www.congreso.gob.pe/I_organos/Mesa_Mujeres_parlamentarias/presentacion.html.
- ¹⁴ See <http://www.cambio.bo/index.php?pag=leer&n=79283>
- ¹⁵ Mexico interview, March 14, 2014.
- ¹⁶ Mexico interview, March 14, 2014.
- ¹⁷ Diario de la Federación 24-12-2012, "Decree reforming Article 90 of the Statutory Law of the Congress of the Mexican States."
- ¹⁸ Mexico interview, March 13, 2014.
- ¹⁹ Argentina interview, April 29, 2009, May 19, 2009 (add more); and with Argentine legislative analyst, August 8, 2009.
- ²⁰ This process began with the construction of an integrated, multi-class, multi-ethnic women's movement in Mexico, which included the widespread participation of female politicians (Lamas, Martínez, Tarrés, and Tuñón 1995; Tarrés 2006).
- ²¹ See http://www3.diputados.gob.mx/camara/001_diputados/008_comisioneslx/001_ordinarias/015_equidad_y_genero/002_antecedentes (accessed May 17, 2014).
- ²² Mexican interview, March 14, 2014.
- ²³ The *Parlamento de Mujeres* was held from 1998 to 2006, suspended in 2007, 2008, and 2009, and re-inaugurated in 2010.
- ²⁴ Mexico interview, December 17, 2013.
- ²⁵ Mexico interview, December 15, 2009.
- ²⁶ Mexico interview, December 7, 2009; Mexico interview, December 19, 2013.
- ²⁷ Mexico interview, December 7, 2009.
- ²⁸ Mexico interview, December 2, 2009.
- ²⁹ Mexico interview, December 3 (#1), 2009.
- ³⁰ Address to the presidents of the states' electoral institutes. 25 September 2003 in the City of Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico.
- ³¹ Mexico interview, December 19, 2013.
- ³² Mexico interview, December 7, 2009.
- ³³ Mexico interview, December 16, 2009.
- ³⁴ Argentina interview, April 15 (#1), 2009.
- ³⁵ Argentina interview, May 28, 2009.

³⁶ Argentina interview, April 15 (#1), 2009.

³⁷ Argentina interviews, April 7 (#2) and June 25, 2009.

³⁸ Argentina interview, April 3, 2009.

³⁹ Argentina interview, April 7 (#1), 2009

⁴⁰ Transcript from the founding meeting of the *Banca de la Mujer*, Argentine Senate, August 14, 2008.

⁴¹ Argentina interview, May 5, 2009.

⁴² A male legislator used the term *mono-tématico* [one-themed] to describe legislators who focused only one area.

Argentina Interview, May 18 (#2), 2009.

⁴³ Argentina interview, April 7 (#2), 2009.

⁴⁴ Argentina interview, April 7 (#2), 2009

Figure 1. Relationship Between Women-Specific Legislative Institutions and Substantive Representation



Table 1. Women-Specific Legislative Committees in Latin America’s Lower or Single Chamber, 2014

Women/Gender Only	Women and Domestic Matters	Domestic Matters Only
Colombia Costa Rica <i>Dominican Republic</i> <i>El Salvador</i> <i>Guatemala</i> <i>Honduras</i> Mexico Paraguay Uruguay	Argentina Nicaragua Panama Peru	Brazil Chile <i>Dominican Republic</i> <i>El Salvador</i> <i>Guatemala</i> <i>Honduras</i> Venezuela

Source: Author’s research, based on countries’ legislative webpages as of 2014

Table 2. Latin America's Women-Specific Legislative Committees in the Single or Lower House, 2014

Country	Committee Title	Male Members	Female Members	Female Legislators, Total
<i>Women/Gender Only</i>				
Colombia	For Women's Equity	0%	100%	12%
Costa Rica	Of Women	0%	100%	39%
Dom. Republic	Matters of Gender Equity	7%	93%	21%
El Salvador	Women and Gender Equality	38%	63%	26%
Guatemala	Of Women	43%	57%	13%
Honduras	Gender Equity	0%	100%	26%
Mexico	Gender Equality	0%	100%	37%
Paraguay	Social Equity and Gender	22%	78%	15%
Uruguay	Gender and Equity	56%	44%	13%
<i>Women-and-Domestic-Matters</i>				
Argentina	Family, Women, Childhood, and Adolescence	26%	74%	37%
Nicaragua	Matters of Women, Youth, Childhood, and Family	10%	90%	40%
Panama	Of Women, Childhood, Youth, and Family	78%	22%	9%
Peru	Women and Family	9%	91%	22%
<i>Domestic Matters Only</i>				
Brazil	Social Security and Family	15%	85%	9%
Chile	Family and Elderly	62%	38%	16%
Dom. Republic	Youth, Adolescence, and Family	27%	73%	21%
El Salvador	Family, Childhood, Adolescence, the Elderly, and Handicapped Persons	44%	56%	26%
Guatemala	Of Youth and the Family	80%	20%	13%
Honduras	Family, Childhood, Youth, and the Elderly	0%	100%	26%
Venezuela	Family	29%	71%	17%

Source: Author's research, based on individual countries' legislative website for committee membership and IPU for total number of legislators.

Table 3. Features of Women's Caucuses in Latin America.

Country	Caucus Name (Spanish acronym in parentheses)	Chamber	Membership: Men	Membership: Women	Stature: Recognized by legislature	Prominence: On legislature's website	Objectives: Has women's interests agenda
Argentina	Women's Bench (before 2012)	Upper	No	All	Yes - charter	Yes	Yes
Bolivia	Union of Women Parliamentarians of Bolivia (UMPABOL)	Both	No	All	Yes - charter	No	Yes
Brazil	Women's Bench	Lower	No	All	Yes - charter	Yes	Yes
Colombia	Women's Bench	Both	No	All	No	No	Yes
Ecuador	Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights (PGM)	Unicameral	Yes	Not all	No	Yes	Yes
El Salvador	Parliamentary Group for Women in the Legislative Assembly	Unicameral	No	All	Yes - <i>reglamento</i>	Yes	Yes
Peru	Roundtable of Women Parliamentarians (MMPP)	Unicameral	No	All	No - offices	Yes	Yes
Uruguay	Bicameral Women's Bench (BBF)	Both	No	All	No - offices	Yes	Yes

Sources: UNDP 2011; Mesa de Género 2012; Johnson and Moreni 2011; and author's research.

Table 4. Relationship between the Design of Women-Specific Legislative Institutions and Substantive Representation

Design Feature – Committees	Substantive Representation
Policy remit includes women/gender	+
Policy power of bill authorship & introduction	+
All-female membership	+/-
Design Feature - Caucus	
All-female membership	+
Recognition by host legislature	+
Women’s interest policy agenda	+

Table 5. Comparing Women-Specific Legislative Institutions in Argentina and Mexico

	Committee - Chamber	Committee - Senate	Caucus
Argentina	Family, Women, Children, and Adolescence (CFMNA)	Women's Bench (after 2011)	Women's Bench (before 2011)
Mexico	Gender Equality (CIG)	Gender Equality (CIG)	<i>unofficial</i>

Source: Author's research, based on countries' legislative webpages as of 2014.

Figure 2. Tradeoffs in Women’s Substantive Representation

		<u>Depth</u>	
		Yes	No
<u>Scope</u>	Yes		Mexico
	No	Argentina	

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